L: Cunningham G-3 (1846-47) 1854 AJ4 W. Tibetans AJ4

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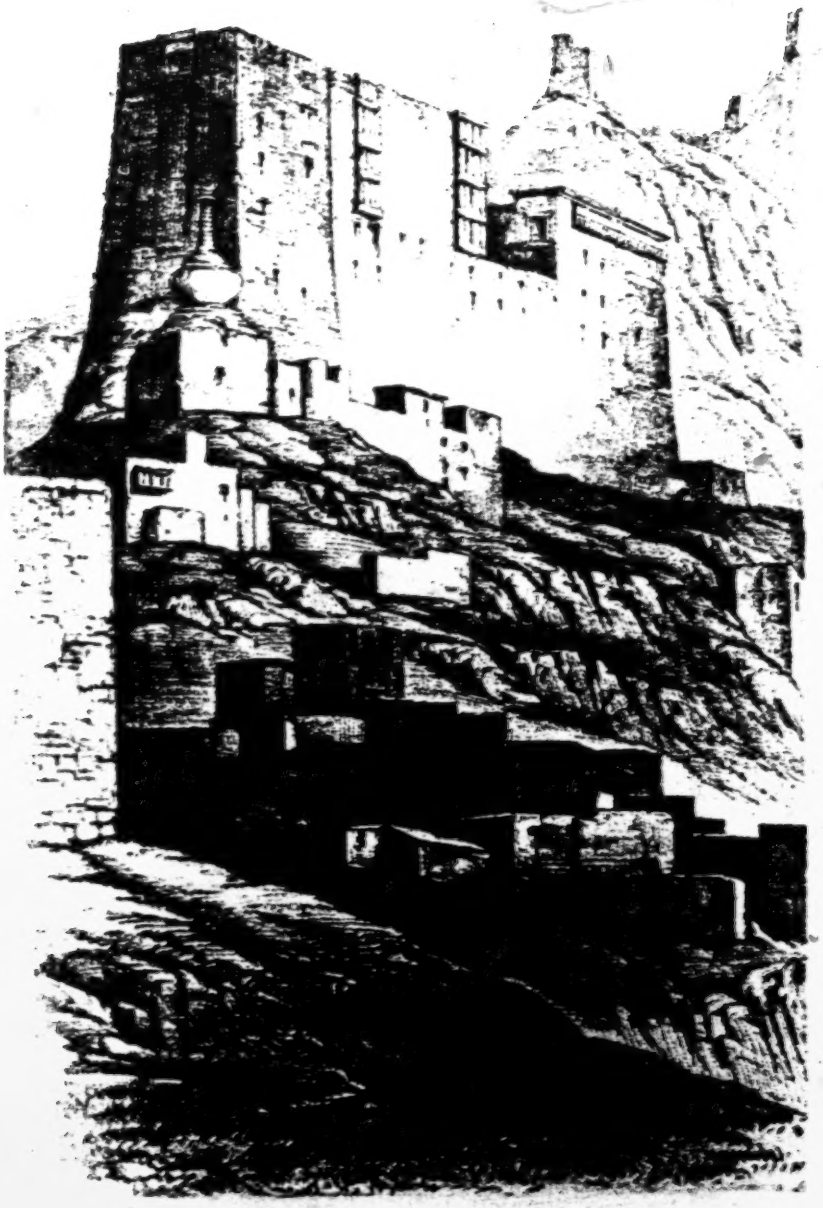

Palace at LF

1: Cunningham G-3 (1846-47) 1854 AJ4 W. Tibetans AJ4

342 clay. The floors are generally of earth, but the better sort are paved with small slit pebbles, about the size of turkeys' eggs, set in clay with the flat surfaces upwards. They form a clean, hard, smooth, and lasting floor.

The principal room generally has a balcony towards either the south or the west, from ten to twenty feet in length, and usually about two feet and a half in width, where the family sit to enjoy the sun in the winter season. The doors are mere rough planks of wood, joined together by wooden tenons, and sometimes strengthened by cross bars fastened with wooden pins. Purdahs or wadded curtains are also used as an additional means of excluding the cold wind; but when the doors are shut, there is only a dim light admitted into these apartments through one or two loopholes, which are closed with small shutters at night. If supplied with glass windows and fireplaces, many of these houses would form very comfortable residences; but at present they must be wretched habitations for the winter.

The houses of the poorer classes are generally of two stories: the lower story being appropriated to their cattle. The roofs are much more coarsely made, and the rooms are small and very low, being sometimes under six feet in height. In Ladák, the upper story is usually reached by a flight of earthen steps; but in Lahul, by the sloping trunk of a tree notched into steps.

344 The royal palace at Lé is a large fine-looking building, that towers in lofty pre-eminence over the whole city. It is 250 feet in length and seven stories in height. The outer walls have a considerable slope, as their thickness diminishes rapidly with their increase of height. The

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344 upper stories are furnished with long open balconies to the south, and the walls are pierced with a considerable number of windows. The beams of the roof are supported on carved wooden pillars, and covered with planks painted in various patterns on the outside. The building is substantial and plain; but its size and height give it a very imposing appearance.*

* See Plate XXI. for a view of the palace at Lé.

at this wonder of technology.

527 [344] The castle, which the Gyalpo now entered with his following, was an enormous, massive, nine-storied structure which had once been erected by the /133/ mighty king Sengge Namgyal (meaning "lion--great conqueror") in the 17th century. Now the huge building usually stood empty, and rats, owls, and bats had made themselves at home in it. Only at certain festive occasions the lions' gate opens and allows noble guests to enter into the barren, empty rooms. The old walls at these times again echo with gay music and festive shouting for a few brief days. For five days on end the grandees of Ladakh celebrate the New Year here with their king. They eat, they drink, the old songs resound in which the heroic deeds of the mythical Kesar, the "son of the gods," and of the old Ladakh kings are praised, and in which the gods and the lamas are glorified. The musical band, which still bears [563] the proud name of the "castle band" (k'ar-mon), and which is composed entirely of Mons (see note 12!), plays old tunes on clarinets and drums in a wild and frenzied rhythm. The dancers, men and women [526] separately, rock themselves in dance; polo games and horse races are organized, for which the gentlemen move to the polo field at the bazaar. Namgyal very eagerly participated in the polo games, he was one of the best players. The people, usually accustomed to deprivations of all kinds, enjoy these rare pleasures in full draughts and give themselves over to uninhibited merriment.

527 782 On the third holiday, the 30th of the tenth month, Namgang, the last day of the moon month, on which no moon brightens the evening sky, Namgyal, at the king's command, rode with him and the other grandees in the early morning to Sheh, a village on the Indus, about seven kilometers removed from Leh. In Sheh there was also a royal castle. From there they went on to the nearby monastery Trigtse, which is situated on a steep cliff. There the king, with his retinue, prayed before the large statue of Gautama Buddha; and his people, in his presence, filled with new butter the cone-shaped "Eternal Lamp" (lo-kon), which was about one meter high and stood in front of the image. This was an offering and a "prayer" to the Buddha for the duration of the coming year, so that the mercy of the mighty one might shine in the coming year in the dark Beyond for the 527 king and his people. On the way back the men were always careful, 778 as they had been on their way out, to ride in such a manner that they always had the long 'manes' (prayer walls) which were constructed along the way, and the longest of which is over 600 meters, /134/ on

13: Heber and Heber D-3 (1914-25) 1926 AJ4 W. Tibetans AJ4

throne, so that we also were enthroned, but not on a raised platform. Although it was still winter, the afternoon sun was extraordinarily hot, as we toiled up the hill on which stands the castle, above the tiers of houses which form the chief part of Leh. This is a fine building, erected some three hundred years ago. It consists of nine storeys, and is built of stone and mudbricks. So high is it that the walls have had to be built with a slight slope inwards to keep them from bulging out. The roof is perfectly flat with a balustrade running all round. When the King or *Skushog* is in Leh, a band of lamas with shawms and trumpets stand at the edge of this to salute them, and make a charming picture outlined against the sky.

We entered under the porch, gaudily decorated with many colours. Above us, and on each side were gargoyles, which it was formerly possible to propel outwards and thus frighten the King's enemies. We walked along a dark passage, and up a flight of rude stone steps. This took us past the Royal Temple, in which are a few images, and a small library which could no doubt tell us a good deal about former kings who ruled here, but what we noticed most was a large heap of black leaves, inscribed with golden letters, which have been thrown on the floor in an untidy heap. They were placed there by the Dogra conquerors, and nobody has ever taken the trouble to sort them. Our way then ascended a rough wooden stairway, and, we eventually entered a large room. This was now filled with many people of high and low degree. In a corner a platform was raised about four feet above the people, and on it were enthroned the Incarnation of Hemis with the young King on his left. We were given seats in front, and had a plate of food placed before us. Hardly had the last member of our party been served, when a leading Ladaki came to us, thanked us in the politest and most elegant language he could command for the trouble we had taken in coming up to the castle on such a hot day, and hinted that we

1: Drew G-3 (1862-1872) 1875 AV1 Kashmir
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the fields, or now and then in separate plantations. But the growth is not enough to supply all that is wanted. When the new bazaar at Leh was built, a great old plantation belonging to the chief monastery was felled for the purpose, nothing approaching to which is now to be seen in the country. The difficulty in the way of plantations seems to be that there is required for them positions advantageous in point of soil and water which are already occupied by crops; one can hardly increase the growth of timber without diminishing the breadth of land tilled, and of that there is none too much.

The houses are built of sun-dried bricks or of stone. They are flat-roofed, of two or three stories, but these all very low. Except in the very poorest houses there is always a reception room kept neat and clean, the rest not having this character. When a visitor comes they carpet this room with felts, and do all they can to make him and his attendants comfortable. The houses are all whitewashed, the aspect of them—perhaps among groups of trees, or else standing out in relief from the sombre rock on which they may be built, rising one behind the other on the face of it—with their verandah-rooms or with balconies projecting, is often bright and pleasant. The houses of people of the higher ranks have an oratory for the practice of the Buddhist religious ceremonies. The palace at Leh is probably the finest building in the country, though some of the monasteries may approach it. This palace is curiously contrived. The arrangement of the rooms is very irregular; they are not in continuous stories, but are at all sorts of levels, connected by narrow and low passages. There are two or three large reception rooms, some of them with an opening to the sky in the centre, this plan allowing of a large fire burning in winter on the floor of the room. The roofs of these large rooms were supported by columns with the wide-extending head or capital which is so marked a feature in Indian architecture; the columns, and indeed most of the wood-work, were gaily coloured, and on the walls were painted sacred pictures.